

Tips on Writing a Letter to a Landlord, Owner, or Management

A series of written communications is recommended to begin the process of requesting a smoke-free policy. The first letter should have a friendly and helpful tone, followed by your concerns about tobacco-smoke infiltration into a unit. It may help to include a letter from a physician, facts about secondhand smoke, why no-smoking policies are legal, and other information. Visit the Department of Public Health's web site www.ct.gov/dph/tobacco for other resources and information.

Steps You Should Consider	Examples You May Borrow From (use your own words and situation)
<p>1. Start on a positive note.</p> <p>Landlords get a lot of different complaints, so start by explaining why you like your unit, the building, and any special services.</p>	<p>Dear _____,</p> <p>The _____ (name) apartment building is located near my job, is affordable, has a lot of storage space, and is well designed. Parking is convenient, the area is quiet, and the clubhouse helps me to get regular exercise. In short, I like living here.</p>
<p>2. What is the problem?</p> <p>Explain the problem, but do not go into great detail yet. If others are affected, be sure to mention that too. Let them know you need their help. Keep the letter as factual as possible and avoid emotional statements.</p>	<p>However, as much as I like this apartment, I and other residents are experiencing serious health problems due to tobacco smoke seeping into our apartments from adjoining apartments. The situation has become intolerable and we need your assistance to resolve this problem.</p>
<p>3. What's in it for them?</p> <p>The costs of refurbishing a smoking apartment can be a huge incentive for making policy changes. Write about the benefits of a smoke-free policy and reassure them that they will not lose business — one of the reasons landlords permit smoking. You may want to provide a fact sheet or letter indicating that: 1) many residential buildings already have no- smoking policies; 2) it is legal to prohibit smoking in a residential building; and 3) surveys indicate most people prefer smoke-free housing.</p> <p>For additional information go to the Smoke Free Housing, Resources for Landlords, Owners and Managers pages at www.ct.gov/dph/tobacco</p>	<p>This building and the health of all residents could benefit from instituting a no- smoking policy because:</p> <p>1) A smoke-free building saves money by reducing the costs of cleaning and repairing carpets, fixtures, and window treatments; priming and painting walls; and general maintenance. Lower insurance premiums are also a possibility. The cost for cleaning an apartment that has damage caused by smoking can run anywhere from \$1,800 to \$3,500.</p> <p>2) There are no state or federal laws keeping owners from banning smoking in their building or on their properties.</p> <p>3) You will likely attract and retain residents. In Connecticut nearly 85% of all adults don't smoke, according to the Connecticut Department of Public Health. These statistics mean you should be able to attract plenty of nonsmoking renters.</p> <p>4) Surveys conducted in Connecticut and other states indicate that there is strong support for smoke-free policies. In addition, more than 86% of Connecticut households reported having smoke-free home rules.</p> <p>5) Enforcement generally is not a problem. "Few owners experience backlash from residents after implementing and enforcing a no-smoking policy," according to the National Apartment Association. Seventy-five percent of adult smokers in Connecticut want to quit smoking.</p>

4. Explain your health symptoms. Let the landlord know how secondhand smoke affects you, when you first noticed it, and what your doctor has told you. Attach a letter from your health care provider.	Personally, the fumes from tobacco smoke give me _____(headaches, causes nausea and dizziness), aggravate my _____, and affect my _____. I began noticing the fumes _____(when). My doctor has told me to avoid exposure to tobacco smoke because it impacts my health. A letter from my doctor is attached.
5. Are other residents affected? If you have contacted other residents, mention how it affects them. Some may not want their names mentioned, so check with them first.	Other residents are experiencing health problems as well due to tobacco smoke coming into their units. For instance, a resident in our building has ____ (illness) which are aggravated by tobacco smoke. Another resident in our building is _____(illness) which tobacco smoke irritates severely.
6. Propose a solution that benefits everyone.	I/we understand your desire to be sensitive to the wishes and concerns of all residents who live here. Therefore, I (and several other residents) ask that you consider conducting a survey to determine resident attitudes toward tobacco smoke exposure, how many people smoke in their units, and the level of support for a smoke-free policy. You might also consider convening a meeting to discuss this issue.
7. Ask for a response, and offer your assistance.	Please let me know in writing how you plan to address this issue. Let me also know if I can be of any assistance. If you would like to review samples of materials that other housing complexes have used to survey residents and to institute smoke-free policies, the CT Department of Public Health can provide guidance, assistance, and educational materials. They can be reached at 860-509-8251 or www.ct.gov/dph/tobacco .
8. End on a positive note.	Working together, we can make this building a better place for us all! I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, _____(your name)
9. Have others review the letter before you send it.	
10. Send copies to your local health department and other health groups Your letter may be taken more seriously.	At the bottom of the letter, indicate where copies are being sent. CC: The local health department Connecticut Department of Public Health, Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program
11. Delivering the letter. To obtain proof that your letter was received; use certified mail with a return receipt through the US Post Office.	
12. Response	If the response is positive, be sure to thank the landlord either by phone or by mail. If there is no response within 30 days or if it is negative, then a second letter may be appropriate.

Adapted from GASP of Colorado (Group to Alleviate Smoking Pollution) www.mysmokefreehousing.org

This information is for educational purposes only and is not to be construed as a legal opinion or as a substitute for obtaining legal advice from an attorney.



For more information, contact the CT Department of Public Health, Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program at 860-509-8251 or check out www.ct.gov/dph/tobacco.

